

MYSTERIOUS MEAT

NO. 1901

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, MAY 23, 1886,
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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“In the mean while his disciples prayed him, saying, Master, eat. But he said unto them, I have meat to eat that ye know not of. Therefore said the disciples one to another, Hath any man brought him aught to eat? Jesus saith unto them, My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work. Say not ye, There are yet four months, and then cometh harvest? behold, I say unto you, Lift up your eyes, and look at the fields; for they are white already to harvest. And he that reapeth receives wages, and gathereth fruit unto life eternal: that both he that soweth and he that reapeth may rejoice together. And herein is that saying is true, One soweth, and another reapeth. I sent you to reap whereon ye bestowed no labor: other men labored, and ye are entered into their labors.”
John 4:31-38.

THE disciples had gone away into the city to buy meat, and for this they cannot be censured. It was necessary that food should be provided, and it naturally fell to their lot to perform that duty. Do not say that they were carnal or unspiritual because of this, for the most spiritual people must eat to live. When they came back from making their purchases, they found their Master sitting by the well, as they had left Him. They naturally expected that He would be as ready to partake of the provision as they were to offer it to Him, but He made no movement in that direction. His mind was evidently far away from the idea of food. He was absorbed in something else, and therefore His disciples sought to call Him back to a sense of His need.

I do not suppose that they had themselves eaten, it was hardly like them to do so while their Lord was not with them. They therefore themselves wished to eat, and they were all the more struck with the fact that He had no care for refreshment. Knowing how weary He had been when they left Him—so weary that He bade them go alone into the city—they were perplexed at His indifference to food, and perhaps judged that He was over-fatigued, and therefore they prayed Him to eat. Importunately, one after another said, “Good Master, it is long since You have eaten, the way has been weary, the day is hot, You seem very faint, we pray You eat a little that You may be revived. The woman to whom You spoke has gone, Your good work for a while is over, let us eat together.”

Again I confess that I do not agree with those who blame these disciples. If it be true that there is nothing very elevated in providing food, there is certainly nothing unworthy in the act. I admire their care for their Master, I praise them for so lovingly pressing upon Him the supply of His necessities. It is right for the spiritual man to forget his hunger, but it is equally right for his true friends to remind him that he ought to eat for his health's sake, it is commendable for the worker to forget his weakness and press forward in holy service, but it is proper for the humane and thoughtful to interpose with a word of caution, and to remind the ardent spirit that his frame is but dust. I think the disciples did well to say, “Master, eat.”

What is more, I will hold them up to your imitation. Jesus has gone from you now in actual person, but His mystical body is still with you, and if you meet with any part of His body in need make it your earnest care. Still pray Him, saying, “Master, eat.” If you know any of His people in poverty, ask them to partake of your abundance, lest haply your Lord should say to you at the last, “I was an hungered, and ye gave me no meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink.” Our Lord's spirituality is not of that visionary sort which despises the feeding of hungry bodies. Look after His poor and needy ones. How

can you be truly spiritual if you do not so? “Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world.” There is much in the commonplace attentions of charity, Jesus commands our consideration of the weaknesses and needs of others, and therefore I say again I commend the disciples that they prayed Him saying, “Master, eat.”

Having done this justice to the twelve, let us do higher honor to the divine One about whom they gathered. His mind was at that time absorbed in spiritual objects, and being so, He wished to lead them into that higher field wherein He Himself was so much at home, and therefore He transfigured their common words by giving them a higher meaning. “Ye pray me to eat,” said He, but “I have meat to eat that ye know not of.”

They did not comprehend what He meant, as the Samaritan woman did not understand Him when He spoke of water, neither did His disciples when He spoke of meat, but you see the Lord endeavored to use the lower expression as a ladder to something higher and more spiritual. This was the Master’s way from the beginning to the end, always to be making similitudes of things seen to set forth the things unseen, always to take the thing which men had grasped and use it as the means of helping them to lay hold on some great truth which as yet was out of their reach.

Inasmuch as refreshments were spoken of, and His disciples saw the need of those refreshments, the Master turns that thought into a deeper channel, and tells them of other refreshments which He Himself enjoyed and wished them to share with Him. In effect our Lord’s reply to the request, “Master, eat,” is this, “I have eaten in the best sense, and I wish you also to eat with Me.” He would have them enter into that service which had yielded so intense a satisfaction to Himself, He would have them know His joy in it.

This morning the run of my subject will be just this, first, *there are refreshments for our hearts which are but little known*—“I have meat to eat that ye know not of.” Secondly, *these refreshments satisfied our Lord*—so satisfied Him that He forgot to eat bread, and thirdly, and a very practical thirdly I hope it will be, *let us seek these refreshments at once, that we too, may forget our earthly needs in a heavenly enthusiasm*. O blessed Spirit of all grace, give us secret, sacred food this morning while meditating upon this theme!

I. First, THERE ARE REFRESHMENTS WHICH ARE LITTLE KNOWN.

Generally men know enough about refreshments of the body. Those questions—What shall we eat, and what shall we drink?—have been long and carefully studied. It seems obvious to all men that if we are to be restored and lifted above fatigue or weakness it must be by corporeal food. Yet there is in the Word of God intimation of another principle, as we read, “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God shall man live.”

The Lord has been pleased to make it generally necessary that the body should be sustained with food, but that is only because the body is to be destroyed, for it is written, “Meats for the body, and the body for meats: but God shall destroy both it and them.” That new body, which will never be destroyed, will probably need no meats. If God so willed it, this frame might be sustained without visible food. There is no absolute necessity that the order of nature or of providence should be just as it is.

Even now we know that there are many ways by which waste can be suspended, and the need of food greatly lessened, and there are conditions under which life has been sustained upon an almost incredibly small portion of food. If God willed it, He could secretly infuse strength into the system, keeping the lamp of life burning by means of a subtle, invisible oil. We are not so absolutely dependent upon the bread we eat as at first sight seems, food is but the vehicle of sustenance, God could sustain us without it.

Now, brethren, our Lord Jesus Christ found for Himself sustenance other than that of food, a food superior to the ordinary meat of men. But these refreshments were not known to His disciples. The common ruck of mankind have no idea of spiritual food, but the disciples were not of the common ruck, they were chosen out of the world, and they had been with their Lord for some little time, and yet they

had not grasped the idea of a man being fed and strengthened by an influence upon his spiritual nature which could raise him above the down dragging of his bodily needs. They could not yet enter into their Lord's secret, He had a meat to eat which even they knew not of.

The reason for His knowing what they knew not was in part the fact that *this nourishment was enjoyed upon a higher plane than these servants of Christ had yet reached*. They were spiritual men in some degree, but they were not highly spiritual, they were mere babes in grace, though men in physical development. They had not yet reached to the height of letting their spirits rule the rest of their nature, nor had they yet learned the proper occupation of their spirits. They could not yet enjoy spiritual meat to the full because they were so little spiritual.

Our Savior was full of the Holy Ghost, and in His inmost nature He was deeply and intensely spiritual, and lived in constant communion with invisible things, and hence it was that He perceived that "meat to eat" which they knew not of. Oh, that we may not miss the delicacies of heaven from lack of a purified taste! It is a sad ignorance which comes of lack of spirituality. The Lord lift us out of it.

Further, these refreshments were unknown to the apostles as yet, because *they implied a greater sinking of self* than they as yet knew. "My meat," said Jesus, "is to do the will of him that sent me." How condescendingly does our Lord sink Himself in this expression! He does not even say, "My meat is to do My Father's will." He takes a lower position than that of sonship, and dwells chiefly upon His mission, its service, and the absorption in the will of God which it involved. He finds His refreshment in being the commissioned officer of God, and in carrying out that commission. In being a servant, obeying the will, and doing the work of another, He feels Himself so much at home that it revives Him to think of it.

Others have been refreshed by gaining honor for themselves, our Lord is refreshed by laying that honor aside. The carnal mind finds its meat and drink in self-will, but Christ in doing the will of God. Doing his own work, and carrying out his own purpose, is the meat and drink of the natural man, the very opposite was the joy of our Lord Jesus. Is it so with you, my hearer, that you will have your own way, and be your own lord and master? You feed upon wind. Very emptiness you seek after, and in the end your hunger shall devour you.

But oh, believer, have you ever tried your Lord's plan? Have you taken your Lord's yoke upon you, and learned of Him? Thus it is that you shall find rest unto your soul. Not in self, but in self-surrender, is there fullness for the heart. You are no longer to live unto yourself, for you are not your own, but you are the servant of Him who has bought you with a price, you will find peace in taking up your proper place. Your lifework is henceforth not to be one of your own selecting, but the work which your great Lord and Master has chosen for you.

Servants lay their wills aside, and do what they are bidden. When a man gets fully into this condition I bear witness that he will be refreshed by it. If I felt that my calling were of my own choosing, and that my message were of my own inventing, I should have no rest, the responsibility would crush me, but now that I feel that I am doing the will of Him that sent me, and know that I am committed wholly to the work of the Lord, I pluck up courage, and put my shoulder to the wheel without misgiving. In the name of Him who has sent me to do this work I find a fountain of fresh strength.

But, brothers, we must get low down, we must come right away from the idea of being original and inventing something and carrying out a novel purpose of our own, we must act only upon commission, we must say only our Lord's words, and do only His work, and then we shall eat of that same loaf on which Jesus fed when He had food to eat which even the twelve knew not of. When we get to know that we are sent of the Most High there is nourishment in that very fact. We need to feel that as the Father has sent Christ into the world, even so has Christ sent us into the world, and if we do not so feel, we shall miss a choice form of spiritual meat.

Further, our Lord not only lived on a higher plane, and felt a greater sinking of self, but *He was in fuller harmony with God than His disciples*. He says. "My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish His work." God's will was His will, not only passively, but actively, so that He wished to do it,

God's work was His work completely, so that He wished to finish it. He longed to go all the length of God's eternal purpose, and carry it out as far as that purpose concerned Himself.

Now, when a man feels, "My one desire is that I may do God's will, I have no other will but His will, my own will has fallen into God's will as a brook falls into a river"—then he is at peace. It is a blessed thing to rejoice in being crossed in our own purpose, in order that the purpose of the Lord may be more completely fulfilled. When a man wants to do God's work, and to get through with it whatever it may cost, he is sure to feel strength in his heart. He who will glorify God, whatever it may cost him, is a happy man. He that serves God in body, soul, and spirit, to the utmost of his power, finds new power given to him hour by hour, for God opens to him fresh springs.

Perhaps you do not see this truth, but if you have ever experienced what it is to lay your whole soul on the altar, and feel that for Christ you live and for Christ you would die, why then you will know by experience that I speak the truth. If your heart's desires were as ravenous as that of the young lions when they howl for their prey, they would be abundantly satisfied by your soul's being tamed into complete submission to the will of God. When your will is God's will, you will have your will, when your will rings out in harmony with the will of God, there must be sweetest music all around your steps.

Our chief sorrows spring from the roots of our selfishness. Hang up self before the face of the sun, as Joshua hung up the Canaanitish kings, and your soul will no longer be consumed with the hunger and thirst of discontent. When you are tuned to perfect harmony with God you begin your heaven upon earth, even though your lot is cast in the hut of poverty, or on the bed of sickness. I know by experience that the way to renew your strength for suffering or for service is to become more and more at one with the will and the purpose of the Most High. As God's glory becomes the one objective of life, we find in Him our all in all.

Once more our dear Savior was sustained by these secret refreshments, because *He understood the art of seeing much in little*. Our Master had been feasting. He had partaken of a more than royal banquet. How? He had been made a blessing to a woman—an ill-famed, much sinning woman. He had led her up to the point at which she could perceive that He was the Messiah, this was to Him a festival. Some would have thought it a trifle, but as a wise man sees a forest in an acorn, so did Jesus see grand results in this little incident.

Many a man would say, "I could easily forget hunger and a thousand other inconveniences if called to preach to a vast congregation like that which assembles in the Tabernacle. It ought to inspirit a man to see so many faces." But note well that it inspirited your Master to see only one face, and that the commonplace face of a villager of mournful character, who had come forth from Sychar with her water pot upon her head. It was not an oration that He delivered, He had not even preached a sermon which would command admiration as a masterpiece of eloquence, and yet His whole soul was absorbed in what He had done!

It was only a talk such as a city missionary would have at any door, or such as would naturally fall from a Bible-woman in her calls from room to room, yet our divine Exemplar saw so much in one soul, and so much valued one opportunity of enlightening it, that He felt a sacred satisfaction in His simple conversation. He saw in the woman the seed-corn of a harvest, and therefore drew large refreshment from her conversion.

We do not usually measure things rightly, I am persuaded that our weights and scales are out of order. We think we are doing a great deal when we get into a big controversy, or write an article that is read all over the nation, or create a sensation which startles thousands. But, indeed, it is not so. The Lord is not in the wind, nor in the tempest, we must go on with the still small voice of loving instruction and persuasion. You must go on talking with your little children in your classes, you must go on speaking to the few sick persons you are able to visit, you must try and preach Jesus Christ in little rooms, or to dozens and scores in the street corner or on the village green. It is the old-fashioned, quiet personal work which is effectual. If we get to think that everything must be big to be good, we shall get into a sorry state of mind.

In the little bit of work thoroughly done God is glorified, much more than in the great scheme that is skimped. That word *skimped* gives a true description of very much Christian work nowadays. A huge piece of moral architecture is carried out by jerry-builders, to whom appearance is everything, and reality is nothing. It tumbles down before long, and then its authors begin again in the same wretched manner, with the same flourish of trumpets, and bragging of what is going to be done. It is worthwhile to spend a year upon the conversion of a single woman, ay, worthwhile to spend a lifetime on the conversion of a single child, if it is soundly done, and there might more come of the true conversion of that woman or child than of all your noise and shouting over a hundred suppositious conversions, forced by excitement like mushrooms in a hotbed.

We want real work, not noisy work, work done in the center of the soul of man, such as Jesus did upon the well. This sort of work will bring refreshment to our spirit, and any other will end in bitter disappointment. I am sure if we are content to do little things in the power of the great God, we shall find our meat therein. Some one here gets up and says, "I see, I see. I always thought that ministers and other workers who are always before the public would have most joy, but now I see that there is a reward for the obscure and hidden worker."

The Lord Jesus Christ was satisfied to sit by a well and talk to one, be you satisfied henceforth to keep on with your mother's meeting, or your tract district, or your Bible class, or your family of little ones. Plod away, for infinite possibilities lie concealed within the least work done for Jesus in the power of the Holy Ghost by a sincere heart. Perfume which may fill the halls of princes lies asleep within a tiny rosebud. Despise no little service, but be grateful for permission to render it.

Thus the Master found satisfying meat—meat little known even by His disciples, and therefore He said, "I have meat to eat that ye know not of."

II. Advance with me, dear friends, to our second theme, THESE SECRET REFRESHMENTS SATISFIED OUR LORD.

I bring this forward to remind you that where He found refreshment we also should find it. Why did it satisfy our Lord to be doing the will of Him that sent Him, and to be finishing His work?

Well, first, because *He had so long hungered to be at it*. For thousands of years the Christ had longed to be here among men. He said, "My delights were with the sons of men." Before He actually appeared in human flesh and blood, our Lord made many appearances in different forms, because He was eager to be at His work, and when He was born, while He was yet a boy, He said, "Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" This was the spirit of Him all His life long. "I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how am I straitened until it be accomplished." He longed to be at work saving men, He hungered to perform His chosen deeds of mercy.

Read in the second chapter of John at the seventeenth verse. He went into the temple and He purged it, and then we read "His disciples remembered that it was written of Him, the zeal of thine house hath eaten me up." That was before He had told them that it was His meat to do the will of Him that sent Him. Our Lord was full of such zeal to be serving God and blessing men that when He did get at it, He was so joyful that everything else fell into the background as if it were not worth a thought. If you and I felt our Lord's anxiety to be serving God and winning souls, we should find refreshment in the service itself, even as He did.

When our Lord did get at His work He gave Himself wholly up to it, He went in for soul-winning heart and soul. There was a wonderful concentration of purpose about our Savior. His face is always steadfastly set to His work, He is instant and constant in it, He is all there and always there. Time was—and I hope the time has gone forever—when there were professed ministers of Jesus Christ whose hearts were in the hunting field. Do you wonder that their ministry was a scandal? Others have been naturalists first, and divines afterwards. Do you wonder that their ministry proved to be a failure?

Time was, and time is, I am sorry to say, when many professed ministers of Christ have their hearts more set upon criticizing the Gospel than preaching it, they are more at home in scattering doubts than in promoting faith. They preach what they are not sure of, and what they have no interest in. It is not

their meat to do the Lord's will, for He never sent them. They get their meat by preaching, but it is not their meat to preach. Surely it must be misery to them to have to tell out an old tale which in their souls they despise. Wretches that they are! I cannot call them better.

It seems an awful thing to me that a man should profess to be a servant of Christ and not put his heart into the Redeemer's service. You may go and sell your calicoes, and your teas and your sugars, if you like, half-heartedly, it will not spoil your calicoes or your teas, but if you preach the Gospel half-heartedly, that is another business. You will spoil every bit of what you preach. What good can come of half-hearted preaching?

And you, good friends, who teach in the school or do any work for Jesus, remember you spoil with that touch of yours all the work you do if your hand is numbed with a cold indifference. If your soul is not in what you do you had better leave it undone, you will do mischief rather than service unless your heart is in it. When Jesus talks with that woman, He is every bit of Him there. He avails Himself of every opportunity, and catches up every chance. He converses like a master of the art of teaching, because teaching is the master passion of His soul.

Now, brethren, when we get to work like that we shall be refreshed by it. If you do what you do not like to do it will be weariness to you, but if your work is the joy of your heart, you will find in the doing of it that you have meat to eat that idlers know nothing of.

Our Lord found great joy in the work itself. I believe it was an intense delight to Him to be telling about that living water to a thirsty soul. It was a high pleasure to Him to be liberating a spirit which had so long been shut up in prison, to be creating new thoughts in a mind which had long groveled in the mire of sin. How pleased He was to hear the woman say to Him, "Whence, then, hast thou that living water?" What a host of thoughts it stirred up in His own soul! The woman had given Him to drink, though she had not let her water pot down into the well. It was such glad, such happy work to Him to be doing good that it was its own reward.

I think the Lord forgot to eat bread that day partly because of *the enthusiasm which filled Him in the pursuit of that soul.* The chamois hunter quits his couch long before the sun is up, and climbs the mountains. He watches from the first gray light for the creature which is the object of his pursuit. Ask him how it is when he returns late in the evening that he has had nothing to eat all day long.

He answers, "I never thought of it, I saw a chamois on a distant crag and I hastened after it. I leaped the ravines, I climbed the steep faces of the rocks, I sprang down again, I was almost on my prey, but it was gone. I crept up within range again, holding my breath lest the scent of me should alarm the watchful chamois. I thought of nothing but my sport, and I never knew what hunger meant until my bullet found its mark in the heart of my prey, and I had drawn out my hunting knife. It was not until I began to lift the game to my shoulder that I thought that I had neither eaten nor drunk that day." You understand what this enthusiasm means, and how it refreshes the hunter.

Some of you have been salmon fishing in the Scot rivers, you have fished on and on until you have hooked a huge fish, and by the time you have landed him, on taking out your watch, you discover that it is long past your dinner hour, and you are surprised that you had not noticed that you were almost faint. Your excitement kept you going, only when it was over did you begin to hunger.

Thus the Master was so taken up with soul-saving that He had meat to eat that others knew not of. I hope we sometimes get into this state of entire absorption under the influence of a burning desire to bring sinners away from sin to their Savior, and lead them to put their trust in Him who is able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by Him. I see the riddle all unriddled. They said, "Master, eat," but I see that He had meat to eat that they knew not of, for the enthusiasm of soul-winning was strong upon Him.

Moreover, the Master had not only felt the enthusiasm of pursuit, but *He was moved greatly by the sympathy of pity.* The man that hunts the chamois has no sympathy with his prey, the man who would take his salmon has no pity for the creature, but he that labors to bless souls is full of tenderness. Many noble women love nursing the sick. Their hearts are at home at the bedside of the suffering. They do not

sleep at night while pain needs relief, and cold sweat needs to be wiped away. Their tender pity gives them a more than ordinary power of endurance. They watch and wait hour after hour. Exhaustion comes at last to them, and then they begin to inquire of themselves, "How was it I held out so long?" Generous sympathy conquered fatigue.

How mothers can and do endure with sick children! They feel that they cannot sleep while the dear one tosses to and fro in fever, or moans in pain. They have lost all care for eating while they guard the brittle thread which threatens so soon to snap. Real sympathy seems as if it swallowed up everything else, as Aaron's rod swallowed up all the other rods.

Sometimes you have seen suffering which you could not help, and you have come away forgetful of all else but the dreadful scene. You loathed the sight of food, you were sick at heart, the sorrow had become your own. You started in your sleep weeks afterwards, for the person wounded in the accident had come before you. Thus was our Savior carried away with pity for lost souls, He knew the danger of that Samaritan city, and that thought caused Him to forget to eat.

More than that, it was not only sympathy, *He felt great joy in present success*. He delighted to see that He had led a soul into life and light. He had the bliss of seeing a sinful woman believe in the Messiah, and of knowing that her heart and life would thus be purified. I do not know anything that can make a man forget his pain and weariness like grasping the hand of a sinner saved. "Oh," says the saved one, "God Almighty bless you! You have brought me to Jesus." This nerves us to new effort.

I speak here from experience, for yesterday evening, when I was thinking of this subject, I was myself somewhat dull through pain and weakness, and as God would have it I took up the Report of the Baptist Missionary Society, which will be issued to you on the first of June, and as I glanced over it, I saw my own name. It seems that our missionary in San Domingo has had a discouraging year, but it was lighted up with one most pleasing incident. A man had come down from the interior of Haiti to ask for baptism. Finding him to be a most intelligent Christian, well instructed in the Gospel, the missionary asked how he came to know anything about it. In reply he told him that he had fallen in with a sermon translated into the French language which was preached by Mr. Spurgeon.

Oh friends, I was dull no longer. I had meat to eat. Had an angel stood in the study, I could not have felt more delighted with his visit than I did when I read of a sinner saved. Here was a sermon translated into French, which was carried far away to Haiti, I do not know how, and there was read by a Romanist, who found by it salvation. God bless him! You cannot faint after such a success, can you? As for myself, despite my sickness, I resolve to go on again, preach with all my might, and print more sermons, and send them out to the ends of the earth. Brethren, never say die. Never dream of giving up. Let God's blessing on your work refresh you.

To complete the list, the blessed Master had something else which made Him forget hunger, it was that *He saw the prospect of better things*. Inquirers were coming out of the city, that one female missionary had gone back and told her story, and the men were coming to hear what Jesus had to say. Our Lord also with prescient eye beheld the day when Philip the Evangelist would go down to Samaria, and when many Samaritans would be brought to the knowledge of the truth.

O friends, let us open our eyes and find refreshment in what God is about to do! Let us have bright views of the future. The Gospel which has saved twenty can save twenty thousand. The same kind of preaching which has blessed this one congregation can bless all congregations. We have only to exercise more faith in it, and proclaim it with greater confidence, and make it more our life work to proclaim it, and the world shall yet come to Jesus' feet, and the old, old Gospel now despised shall yet again be had in honor. Let us be of good cheer. If we do but serve God as Jesus served Him we shall have meat to eat that will fully satisfy us, as it did our Lord.

III. Thirdly, LET US AT ONCE SEEK THIS REFRESHMENT.

That is our practical business. If there is meat to eat that we know not of, let us try to know of it at once. I am speaking, of course, only to you who are converted, and are thus saved by faith in Jesus Christ. You who are not yet believers cannot eat of this secret meat, for you are not alive unto God, you

need to be quickened by the Spirit of our God, you must be born again before you can eat the bread of heaven. May the Lord lead you to saving faith in Jesus Christ at once! But I speak to you that know the Lord, you who labor for Him, and need to be refreshed this day. Look you to the right place for nourishment. Are we weary? Then let us seek refreshment by following out the directions of our Lord in the text before us.

First, *let us remember that we are sent of God*. Do not forget that. Say with your Lord, "My meat is to do the will of him that sent me." Each redeemed one is sent forth by his Redeemer. I do not know what the Lord has sent *you* to do. I hope you know that each man for himself, but when you know what work you are called to do, do not be held back by anyone, wait for no man's consent, patronage, or help. Strengthen your soul upon the persuasion that God has sent you, and then go forward. If God has sent you, who can stand against you?

A Queen's messenger claims that we clear the road for him. An officer who bears the Queen's authority is authorized to lay all persons under orders to speed him. He who rides on royal business has precedence over all others. Get to feel, Christian friend, that Jesus has sent you, and herein will lie food for your courage. Know that you have a mission, and go at it, and let it be unsafe for anyone to stand in your way. Let opposers know that somebody will have to clear out, for if God sent you, in that sending there is a force and an energy which nothing can safely resist. Do not make a noise. Forbear all blustering, but quietly set yourself to work. If God has sent you, you will be like the greater Sent One, of whom we read, "He shall not strive, nor cry, nor cause his voice to be heard in the streets," but at the same time "He shall not fail, nor be discouraged."

Next, if we desire to be refreshed, let us *find joy at once in God's work and will*. You have been trying to find joy and refreshment in your own work and your own will, and you have failed, come, then, and sail in another direction. But upon this I have already spoken. If all the work you and I have to do can be made to be God's work, if we will do all things to His glory, whether it be mending of shoes, or making garments, or preaching sermons, or plowing of fields, then shall we be happy in God, and our souls shall be fed upon the finest of the wheat. No drudgery remains when the lowliest labor is seen to be part of a priestly service. When the lowest work glows with the glory of a divine call there is refreshment in it. I am sure I am directing you in the right way to find sweet morsels for your heart when I urge you to have joy in God's work rather than in your own.

Next, *let us get to work*. The Master says to His apostles, "Say not ye, There are yet four months, and then cometh harvest"? This was a common saying among the lazy. The time for work was never come, they always found reason for delay, the harvest was always four months off. Many are going to do a lot of work one of these days. Just now they take things easy, but in four months they will let you see how they can labor. We have too many Christian people around us who find no joyful satisfaction in divine things because they do not at once spend themselves for Christ. One inquires, "What is the best way to do good?" Our answer is, *do it*.

I cannot give you any better recommendation. The best way to serve Christ is to serve Him. A man who was hungry, when he was asked what was the best way to dine, said, "Give me a knife and fork, and give me a chance, and I will soon show you." When asked how you can serve God, reply by seizing the first opportunity and doing it. For our joy and comfort be it remembered that opportunities are many and present. "Say not ye, There are yet four months, and then cometh harvest? Lift up your eyes, and look at the fields; for they are white already to harvest."

Further, if we want to have joy and refreshment in our own Christian life *let us leap into our place at once*. These disciples were not to be sowers, but reapers. Many others are not to be reapers, but sowers. You must get to work in the place into which the Lord puts you, there must be no picking of positions, you must jump into the saddle and be off. It may be that you say, "I should like to begin an altogether new work," but if the Lord appoints you to go on with the work that someone else has carried on for years, do not hesitate. Perhaps you say, "I should like to labor where the first rough work is done," but if your Lord directs you to commence on the uncleared forest, do not raise an objection.

It may be you wish to carry up the last hod of bricks to put on the chimney, but if the house has not reached that condition yet, be quite as willing to dig out the cellar. We must be willing to hook on anywhere. Be leader or shaft-horse. Be first or last. Be sower or reaper, as the Lord ordains.

Dear friends, you will never get refreshment in Christ's service if you bring a dainty self-will into the field and set it to make a selection, for this is contrary to the true spirit of service. Have no choice, and then you will find satisfaction.

If we are to get refreshment for our souls we may also *anticipate the wages*. There is to be a time when workers together with Christ are to receive wages. The text says, "He that reapeth receiveth wages." In our own country agricultural laborers have been paid so little that we could hardly call it receiving wages, but when harvest time comes, then the reaper is paid, and truly receives wages. The hardest-fisted miser must pay for reaping, must he not?

Even the most grudging miser must pay his reapers. There must be special money for mower and reaper. Let us work on, for our Master speaks to us of wages, and He always pays liberally. Your reward is not what you get at present, but it lies in the glorious future. When the Lord Jesus comes He will reward all His stewards and servants. No truth is plain in the four Gospels than this fact, that when Jesus returns to this earth He will distribute recompense in proportion to work done. Herein is meat for us to eat which may well sustain us under the burden and heat of the day.

Then comes the end. If any of you wish to be refreshed, remember the end. What is the end of sowing and the end of reaping? Is it not the completed harvest? See you not the last wagon loaded with grain? See the children on the top there! Hark how the rustics shout their joy as they bring in the precious fruits of the earth! And there is a supper at night. The master has been killing his fatlings, and he invites all his laborers to supper. How they feast with him!

Sow on, work on, reap on, for there will come a day when heaven and earth shall be moved with joyous acclamations, because the Lord's purpose is accomplished, and His work is finished. Then shall we sit down at the supper of the Lamb and rejoice together, as many of us as have had a hand in the blessed work and service in which our Master laid down His life. Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end. Be encouraged and refreshed this morning. Feed upon the eternal dainties which are provided for you by your Lord, and be glad in His name.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—JOHN 4

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—103, 162, 377

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